



The KRUGER Millions

Kruger Pound

The story of the Kruger Millions is a legend that refuses to die, although history has disproved the existence of the treasure. Treasure hunters are however still hunting for the elusive treasure.

The Anglo-Boer war and events at the time gave rise to the legend of this golden hoard, which many firmly believed lies buried somewhere in the Lowveld.



When the British occupied Pretoria on June 5, 1900, Lord Alfred Milner established that gold to the value of approximately £800 000 (about R8-million in today's terms, but bear in mind that the price of gold has gone up manyfold since 1900) had been removed from the S A Mint and National Bank between May 29 and June 4, 1900.

Kruger Gold Bars

Gold to the value of £2,5-million was confiscated from gold mines and, according to documentary proof, £1 294 000 was removed from the SA Mint and National Bank. Gold to the value of about £2 million had disappeared! Milner did everything in his power to find the gold but rumours began to circulate that the gold was buried somewhere and this fired the imagination of many, including that of the writer, Gustav Preller.



Armed with a pistol, he dramatically commandeered a mule wagon in Sunnyside. That night one load of gold was transported by the mule wagon, and four loads by a horse cab, to a waiting train on Pretoria station.

In the Preller collection, in the State Archives in Pretoria, there is a typed copy of the article in which Preller says: "I think it was on 28 May 1900, because on 31 May I left Pretoria. Let's say it was 28 May. In any case it does not seem that the precise date is important now".

A Younger Smuts



The precise date is important, as it is a historic fact that the gold was removed on June 4, 1900, a day before the British forces occupied Pretoria. In his "Memoirs of the Boer War", General J C Smuts said the British forces had progressed as far as Six Mile Spruit on June 4, 1900, just outside of Pretoria.

Here the Boer forces resisted the British, to keep them from entering Pretoria, so that there was enough time to remove the money and gold which belonged to the government, as well as a large amount of ammunition and a number of cannons, that were still in Pretoria.

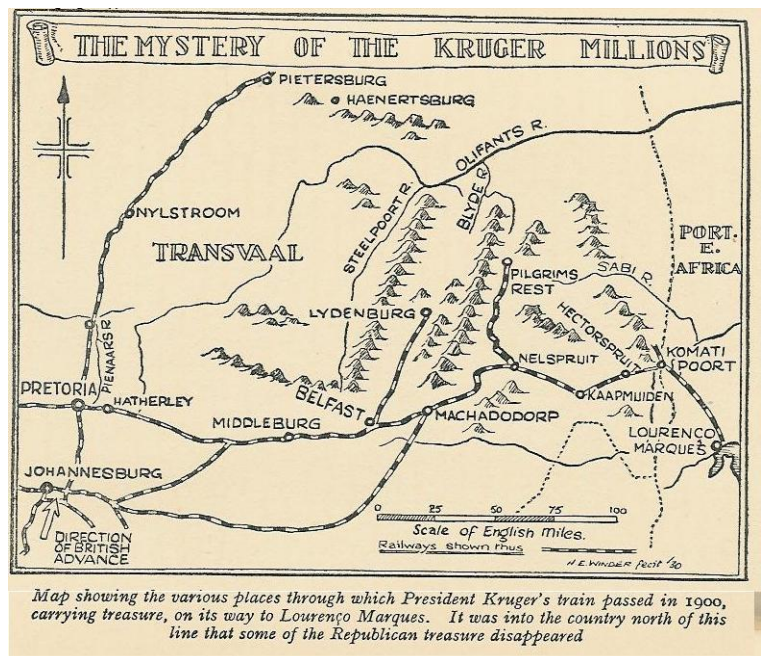
The removal of the money and gold belonging to the government from the National Bank was Smuts' specific responsibility.

Ernest Meyer, Master of the Mint in 1900, was involved in the removal of the money and gold from Pretoria. On October 25, 1949, as a result of what Preller wrote, Meyer drew up a document in which the removal of the money and gold on June 4, 1900, is described.

Map Kruger Millions

In Meyer's version of the events General Smuts, who was State Attorney at that time, was left behind in command at Pretoria, while the government head-quarters moved quietly and almost unobserved to Machadodorp. On June 2, the British forces were approaching Pretoria from the South. The mint was still in operation and, as was usual, was closed on Saturday June 2.

He was amazed that no preparations had been made for the removal of the gold. The British would enter Pretoria within the next few days and Meyer reported this to Jules Perrin, head of the mint. Perrin's answer was that he had not received any instructions to remove the gold and that they would have to submit to the authorities whoever they might be.



Six Mile Spruit



The British occupation was imminent. On the Sunday the sound of cannon fire could be heard, and on Monday morning June 4 reports were received of fighting at Six Mile Spruit. The staff at the mint started the day at the usual hour of 07hrs00 and Perrin distributed the metal to the different departments for processing. Perrin and the office staff then went home to return at 09hrs00, while the technical staff continued working. During Perrin's absence, Meyer took the opportunity to warn the smelter and purifier not to proceed with the processing of the gold, but to await the directions of the State Attorney. Everyone at the mint was willing to co-operate as they were also at a loss to understand Perrin's inexplicable behaviour.

Meyer proceeded to General Smuts' home in Sunnyside and informed him of the situation. In shocked tones he exclaimed "What, has the gold not been taken away?" He told Meyer to return to the mint immediately and to await him there. Smuts arrived at the mint just before 09hrs00 and after a few words to Perrin and Hugo, the

National Bank manager, Smuts ordered the gold to be collected, weighed, recorded and made ready for despatch to the Pretoria station.

Pretoria Mint

The weighing and recording of the gold took time and consisted of gold bars, unprocessed gold and approximately 100 000 Kruger pounds to the value of £750 000.

At 12hrs00 all was in readiness and the gold loaded into the train's baggage compartment. Meyer and an armed guard of between four and eight men travelled in the passenger compartment. Thus the last train under the flag of the Republic left Pretoria, amidst the thunder of cannon fire, taking the precious freight to safety.



Machadodorp



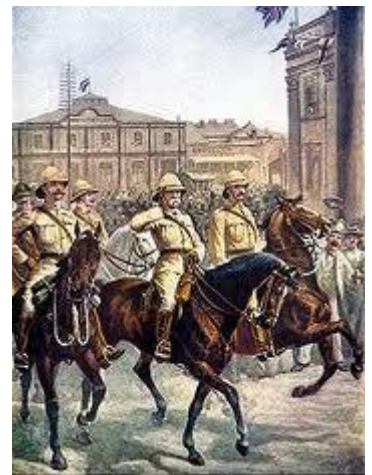
The train arrived at Machadodorp at 02hrs00 where Kruger was residing. Here Meyer assisted with the payment in gold to several claimants and with the help of the auditors and treasury personnel had a busy time.

After Meyer left for the front on July 17, 1900, to join Max Theunissen's Scouts, Commandant General Meindert Noome, Chief Clerk to the Auditor General, took over from Meyer.

Fall of Pretoria

Apart from the account of the gold from the mint being loaded, there was supposed to be gold bullion in bar form from the gold mines that was also loaded. In 1930, according to Historian Hedley Chilvers however, most of the bar gold was never accounted for !

He maintains that the total value of the bar gold was £2 million (approximately 480,769 ounces or 1,202 bars) which would have a value of 26 million dollars (R6.6 billion) today – consisting of 183,138 ounces of bar gold (457 bars) was taken from the Witwatersrand mines : Robinson Mine (198 bars), Ferreira Deep (104 bars), Ferreira Mine (96 bars) and other small mines (60 bars).



Louis Botha



12 years after the end of the war the State Mining Engineer Jan Munnik said at a public meeting: "I would ask General Botha what has been done with the 134 gold bars, worth roughly £750,000, which he had recovered from the mines, and which, at President Kruger's departure, were left in the hands of the Commandant-General, General Botha, and two others, by government resolution. Thus far the gold has never been accounted for, and if General Botha can give a satisfactory explanation, and if there is any gold left, I would say: Hand it over to help the Empire."

A reporter from the *Rand Daily Mail*, L. van Gelder, who was present at the meeting, wrote the story which was published the next day. The prime minister read the story in a Cape newspaper and "his face grew black as thunder". The result was an action for criminal libel initiated by Louis Botha against Jan Munnik which was brought before Mr J.C. Juta in the old magistrate's court in Johannesburg on 27 October 1915.

Christiaan de Wet

What was interesting about the trial was not so much the libel case, but the witnesses who appeared – all prominent Boer leaders during the war that had ended 12 years previously. Aside from Louis Botha himself there was General Schalk Burger, ex-vice-president of the South African Republic; ex-president of the Orange Free State, F.W. Reitz; and General Christiaan de Wet, then residing as a prisoner of the Crown in the Johannesburg Fort. (He was one of the leaders of the 1914 rebellion who had been run to earth deep in the wilderness of Bechuanaland).



ZASM Tunnel



A number of witnesses who had been involved with the removal of the gold from Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pilgrim's Rest and Barberton also gave testimony. The truth in fact supports the supposition that the 'Krugers Millions' vanished into thin air somewhere between Machadodorp and the Mozambican border, (and then more specifically, were buried on a farm somewhere between Sabie and Watervalboven). This haul had been augmented by the addition of gold bars and amalgam taken from the Pilgrim's Rest and Barberton mines.

President Paul Kruger

Dr (later Mr. Justice) F.E.T. Krause, who was responsible for the removal of the gold from the Johannesburg mines and its dispatch to Pretoria in 1900, gave specific evidence of the quantity of gold recovered from the Robinson Mine: 120,000 ounces. You will recall that the historian Chilvers estimated this quantity at only 78,958 ounces in 1930, so his estimation of the size of the original fortune is a possible underestimation!



Conclusion

We are not sure if this mystery will ever be resolved.

In 2001 there was even a rumour doing the rounds that a family of Zulu labourers had found the treasure. *The Independent* newspaper reported on the faux-finding stating that a previous newspaper report claimed that the family "who had been living in Ermelo for more than 100 years had dug up some 4 000 gold coins known as Kruger pounds and may have sold up to 400 of them for their scrap value since the 1960s."

Whether President Paul Kruger really left behind a treasure of golden coins for his beloved Boere followers has never been established. Official reports obviously deny it, cynics brush it aside as nothing more than a fairy tale, but there are those faithful few who firmly believe and are determined to find it.

So the legend lives on.....